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ABSTRACT

The need for instructional programs for young, beginning motorcyclists is clearly indicated by statistics; an estimated 70 percent of motorcycle accidents involve inexperienced riders. Teaching the techniques of coexistence in driver education courses is also important since an estimated 62 percent of all auto-cycle accidents are caused by the automobile driver. Military bases, private driving schools, motorcycle dealer sponsored schools, youth and service clubs, as well as public schools could offer motorcycle safety instructional programs. A survey revealed a lack of existing programs, citing a shortage of qualified teachers as the main cause. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF), founded by the six leading motorcycle manufacturers in the United States, offers a remedy through services in teacher education, development of related curriculum materials, testing of such materials, data analysis, and research. Recently graduate workshops were conducted offering basic riding instruction, problem identification, and educational programming and curriculum development, aimed at increasing the number of qualified motorcycle teachers. Now the responsibility rests with the high school traffic safety educators, teacher training faculty, State education department personnel, and others to provide this needed instructional program. (MW)

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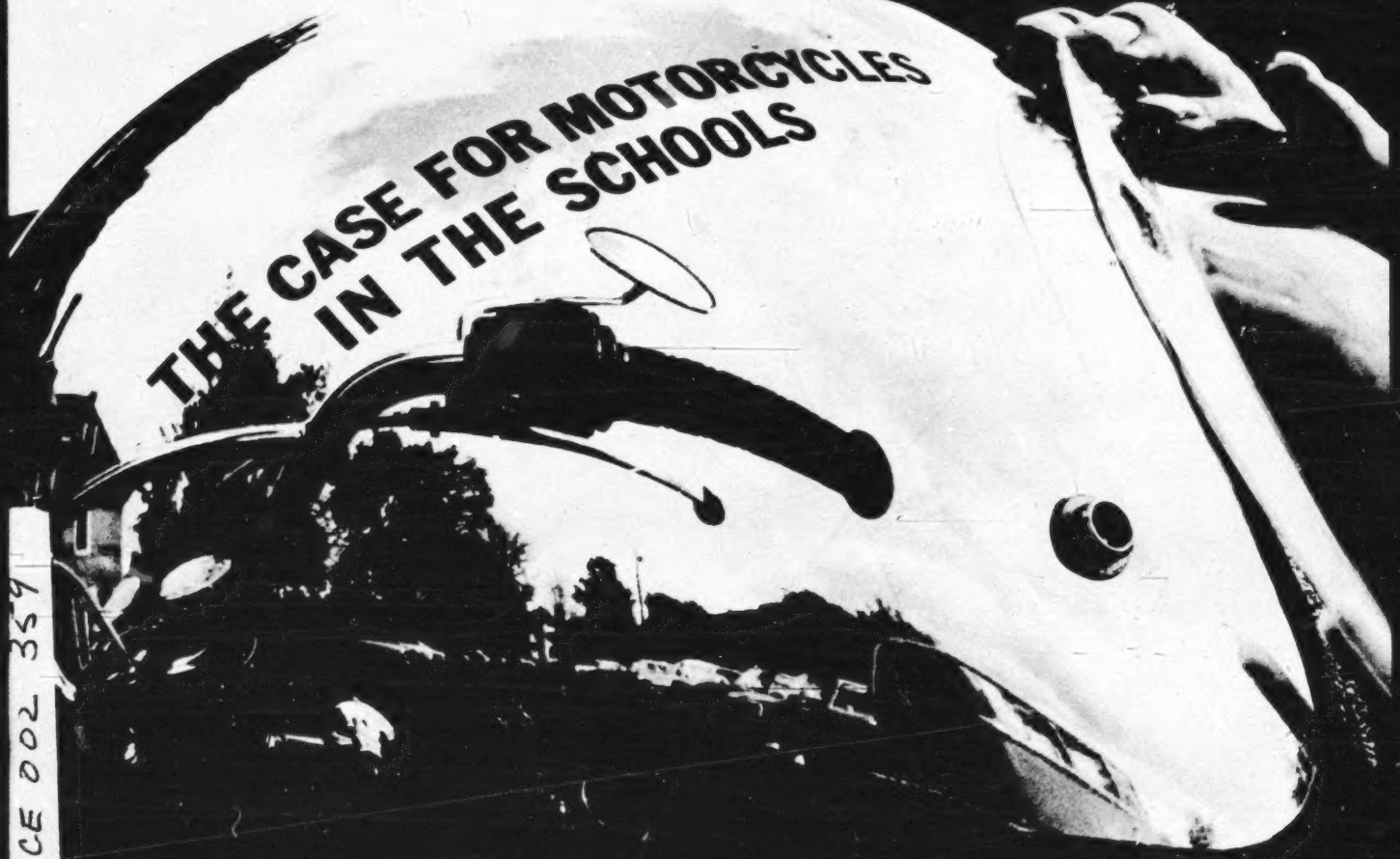
THE CASE FOR MOTORCYCLES IN THE SCHOOLS



by Charles H. Hartman

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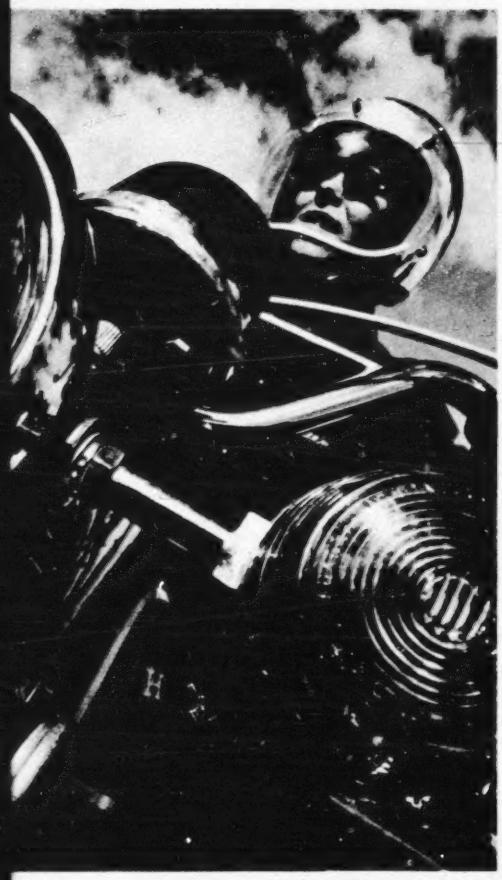
In 1933 Amos Neyhart, the Father of Driver Education, conducted the first on-the-street course in public schools. Forty years later we are seeing new pioneers in driver education—the foresighted educators who have included motorcycling as part of their curriculum.



And with good reason when we consider:

- Motorcycle deaths have nearly doubled in the past eight years, rising from 1,515 in 1965 to 2,861 in 1972.
- In its 1971 edition, *Accident Facts* stated that younger riders are most heavily involved in smashups. Highest fatality rates involve the youngest operators—16–19 years—those who have the least riding experience. And a recent survey of motorcycle accidents in Charlottesville, Virginia, shows that 72 percent of the operators involved in crashes in that area had *no* formal instruction.
- A University of North Carolina study estimates more than 70 percent of all motorcycle accidents involve riders with less than six months operating experience and cites "lack of knowledge regarding turning, stopping and riding in traffic" as prime contributors.
- Martin L. Reiss of the research firm, Bio Technology, Inc., in a paper delivered to the Second International Congress on Automobile Safety (July 1973), listed a score of countermeasures designed to halt the upward spiral of motorcycle accidents. Education and training programs led the list, followed by stiffer licensing and testing, and 100 percent usage of helmets, facemasks and high visibility vests.

Little need be added. The desirability of high quality instructional programs is obvious—particularly a program for young, beginning motorcycle riders.

Lest some remain unconvinced, the experience of a Japanese high school instructor with a motorcycle safety program is worth recounting. Yoshinao Sugie told the Congress of Automobile Safety:

In my high school of 600 students, about half of them ride motorcycles daily. There were an average of two deaths and 65 accidents per year before I introduced an instructional program for safe riding.

After the safety education program started, the accident rate gradually began to drop in spite of the fact that traffic grew heavier and heavier each year. After six years, accidents were down to 29 a year.

Ironically, Mr. Sugie was transferred to another school at this point and the highly successful safety program was allowed to deteriorate by officials at his old school. Without a solid, ongoing program, the motorcycle accident rate at the school shot right back to where it was.

If nothing else, Mr. Sugie's experience indicates that a continuing program of high quality motorcycle rider training is a prerequisite to safety. His success through the years with quality driver education courses confirms this premise.

Our secondary schools represent a logical place to provide quality instructional courses on motorcycle safety. Clearly, the 2.6 million students annually completing driver education programs in America's high schools (1971 estimate) become an important audience not only for learning safe practices of motorcycle riding, but also for gaining understanding of the coexistence and interaction necessary between auto and cycle drivers.

As the number of motorcyclists grows, so does the necessity for teaching the techniques of coexistence in every driver education course. A University of North Carolina reported recently that 62 percent of all autocycle accidents were caused by the driver of the automobile. Generally motorists do not understand how to treat a motorcycle on the road; few realize that the motorcyclist is entitled

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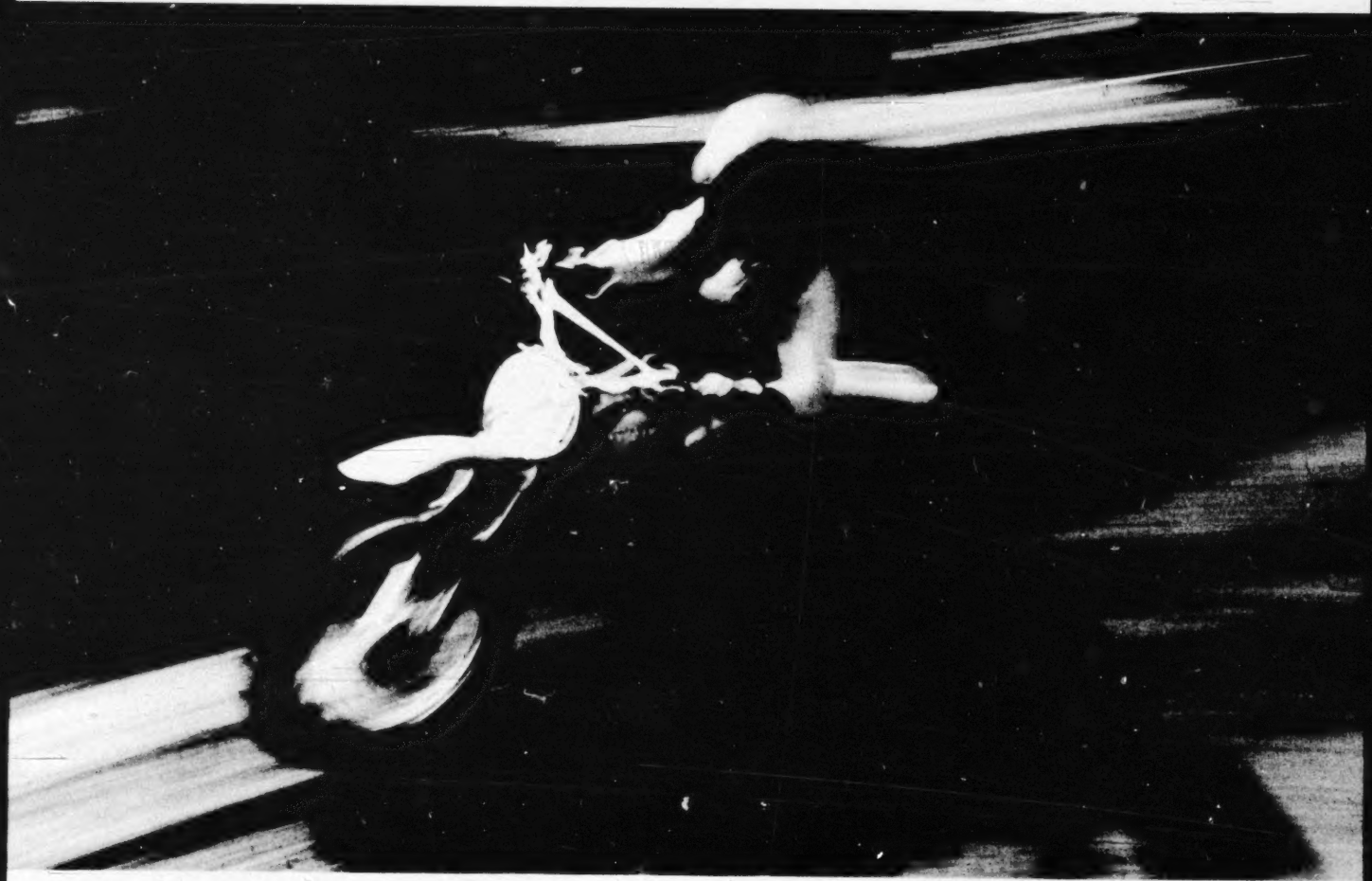

to the same amount of space as the motorist.

Beyond that, some unknown portion of that same 2.6 million young people will seek to ride a motorcycle. Whether it is for fun, economy or whatever—these boys and girls will learn to ride. Quality motorcycle safety instructional programs in the public schools could enable them to learn to ride with minimum risk of crash involvement.

The public schools are not, of course, the only place for motorcycle safety instructional programs. Other distinct possibilities include military bases (there are an estimated 500,000 motorcycles being used on U.S. military bases), privately owned driving schools and a variety of community settings, such as motorcycle clubs, motorcycle dealer sponsored schools, youth and service clubs. In fact, future years will probably bear witness to the growth of instructional programs in all of these settings.

However, the public schools have some built in advantages for developing and sustaining high quality motorcycle safety instructional programs. Many have had the benefit of years of experience with driver education programs, a not dissimilar activity. Moreover, the students are readily at hand, facilities (classrooms, off-street areas) are available, financing may be available as an adjunct to the driver education program or through other sources, and resident instructional staffs may be developed from educators already expert in other aspects of traffic safety.

Although the need is great, the number of motorcycle safety instructional programs is small. A study conducted for the Motorcycle Industry Council Safety and Education Foundation by the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association revealed:

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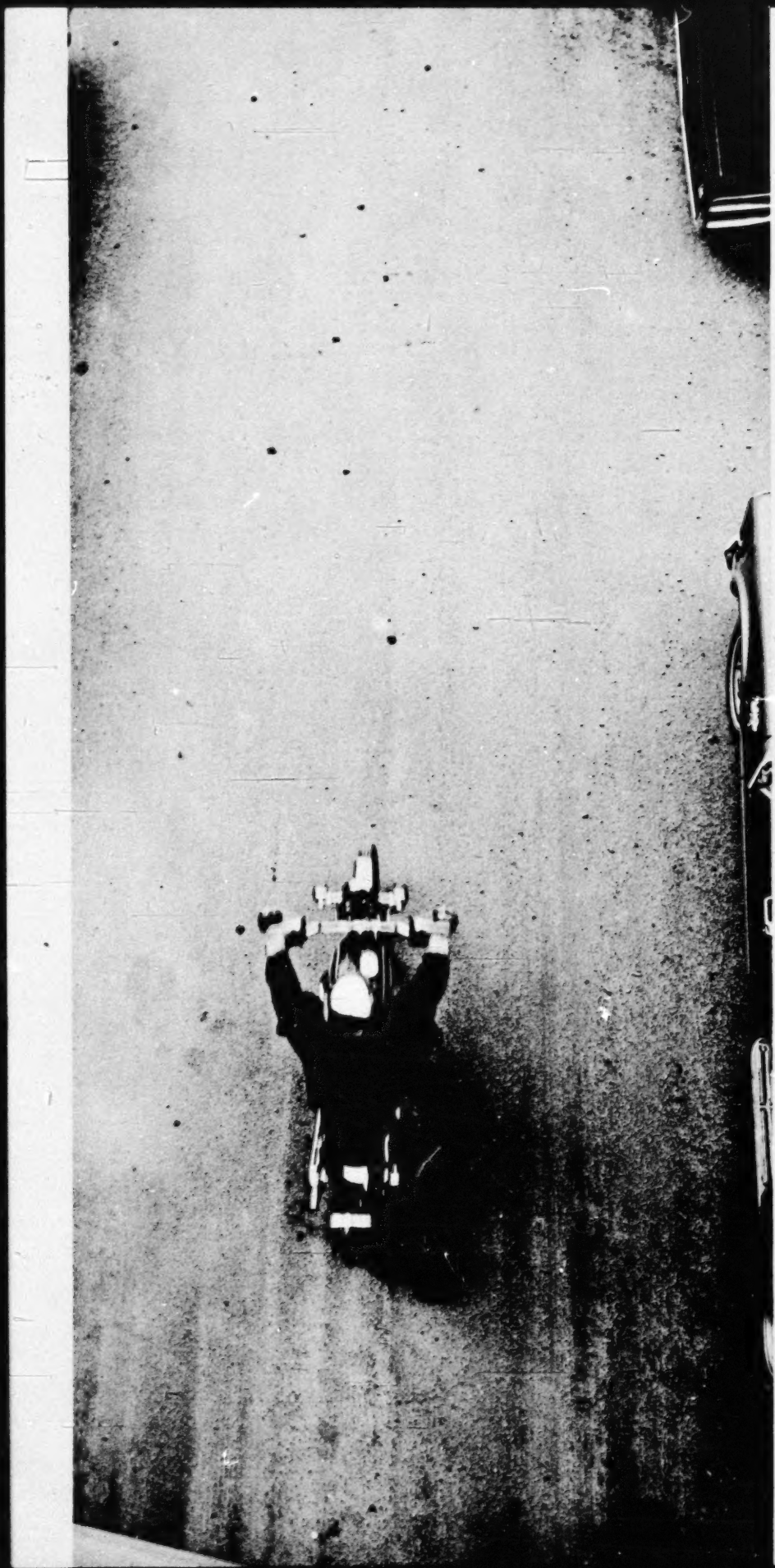

- Motorcycle safety instruction (classroom only) is offered in more than 4,000 of the nation's 26,000 secondary schools;
- Laboratory, or on-cycle instructional programs, presumably combined with classroom instruction, are offered in just 107 schools.*

Generally the classes were conducted during school hours, constituting a credit course, and were open to all students. Local dealers usually provided the cycles.

A basic reason for the limited growth suggested by the survey, is the lack of qualified teachers. An insufficient number of qualified teachers for motorcycle instruction was reported by 69 percent of the state education departments. About half of the respondents specifically cited this shortage as a factor in planning school and college programs in this field.

State laws vary as to what qualifies a teacher in motorcycle safety. Only 15 percent require experience with motorcycles. However, I believe first-hand experience is essential to successful teaching of motorcycle safety.

The Motorcycle Industry Council Safety and Education Foundation was created last year specifically to help overcome problems discussed above. Its mission is to enhance and promote the safety of two-wheeled motor vehicle operators—and to hurdle a host of related obstacles as well.

Known in abbreviated form as the "Motorcycle Safety Foundation" (MSF), this non-profit organization was founded by the six leading motorcycle manufacturers in the American market —BSA/Triumph, Harley-Davidson, Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki, Yamaha.

**Responses were received from 52 percent of the state education departments and came from 48 states.*

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MSF offers a positive approach designed to deal with the rising trend of motorcycle-car crashes. Initially, MSF is heavily involved in teacher preparation, development of motorcycle safety education curriculum materials, the testing and evaluation of such materials, and with data analysis and research.

An early thrust of the Foundation was a series of graduate workshops conducted this past summer at eight colleges and universities. Traffic safety educators, primarily college and university professors, attended workshops covering:

- Basic instruction in motorcycle riding.
- Identification of problems involved in the traffic mix of two- and four-wheeled vehicles on the roadway.
- Educational programming and curriculum development.

Two objectives were sought through this initial program: to improve or develop the motorcycle instructional capability of safety specialists and to begin a "multiplier effect" that will increase the number of qualified motorcycle teachers. The 120 college professors, state education department specialists, military safety officers and others who completed this program are each expected to qualify a minimum of 20 additional teachers during the next academic year.

Thus, the process has begun. Teachers are being properly trained. Curriculum materials are under development. Research has been initiated. Testing and evaluation will follow.

From this effort, the raw materials will be available soon to provide all who are interested with the teaching techniques and riding experience essential to help others enjoy motorcycling with a minimum of risk.

But efforts such as those of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation can carry only a part of the burden. Curriculum materials that are developed and tested must be put into daily, effective use. Teachers who receive suitable preparation must in turn organize and teach courses to others.

High school traffic safety educators, college and university faculty, state education department personnel and others must work together to fulfill their responsibilities in motorcycle education. Motorcycling has truly come of age; it is here to stay. Learning to ride safely must be made a part of that experience.

Editor's Note: To obtain motorcycle curriculum materials, write Motorcycle Industry Council Safety and Education Foundation, Inc., 1001 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 701, Washington, D.C. 20036.